



News & Views

**Joyce
McDonald**

State Representative • 25th District



Serving Edgewood, Milton, Pacific, Puyallup, South Hill, Summit, and Sumner

1998 Session Update



Committees:

Law and Justice (*vice chair*)
Children and Family Services
Trade and Economic
Development

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Dear neighbors,

The 1998 legislative session, my second in Olympia as your state representative, began Jan. 12. Following opening-day ceremonies, and joint sessions of the House and Senate to hear remarks by U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich and the annual "state of the state" address by Gov. Gary Locke, we got right to work. It's only a 60-day session this year, but **there are plenty of important issues to keep us busy.**

In the House, we have already approved a number of bills passed by the Legislature last year that were vetoed by the governor, but most of our time in the early weeks of the session has been spent in committee hearings.

Some of the key issues the committees will deal with before they are considered by the full House include **transportation funding, education improvements, the supplemental operating budget, drunk driving laws, juvenile offender group homes, additional tax relief and the state's \$861 million surplus.** I also have several personally sponsored bills I'll be working on that are discussed in this newsletter.

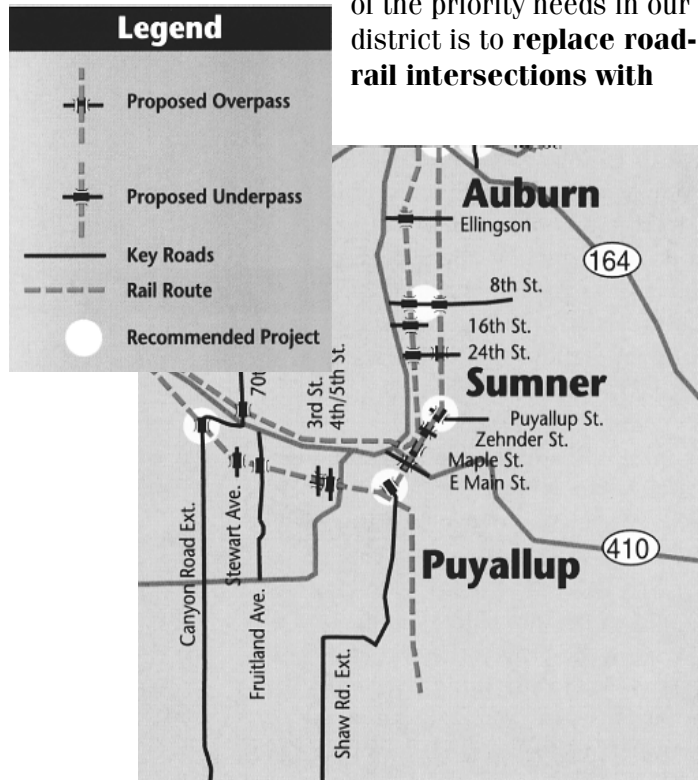
If you have questions, ideas to share or concerns about any issues being considered by the Legislature this year, please contact me by phone, mail or e-mail. **Your comments are important to me,** and I look forward to hearing from you.

Joyce

Meeting transportation needs

There is general agreement that our state faces critical transportation needs. Those needs include infrastructure challenges to ensure our economy stays healthy, as well as commuter gridlock problems. One

of the priority needs in our district is to **replace road-rail intersections with**



overpasses and underpasses. Freight mobility challenges and commuter frustrations both would be resolved by completing these “grade separation” projects.

One possible funding solution being considered to help pay for new projects is to transfer some portion of the motor vehicle excise tax (MVET) money that currently goes into the state general fund to the transportation fund. We’re also looking at ways to cut waste and more effectively use existing transportation dollars. **My goal is to find creative ways to responsibly and effectively meet our state’s transportation needs without raising the gas tax.**

Protecting taxpayers

Before the '98 session ends, we will adopt a supplemental budget to fine-tune the two-year operating budget we passed during the 1997 session. I will work to continue our commitment of **protecting taxpayers by holding the line on spending** and by seeking additional tax relief.

With a strong economy, and the responsible spending policy we have worked hard to achieve, our state enjoys a projected budget surplus of \$861 million.

I believe, and many of my colleagues agree, that we should keep about \$500 million in reserve to protect taxpayers against future economic downturns. However, **I also believe there is room for some targeted tax cuts** to help keep Washington’s job-creating economy strong, and to allow families to keep more of their own hard-earned dollars.

Targeting drunk driving

Our current laws are not doing the job of keeping drivers and pedestrians safe from drunk drivers. The fact is, 331 men, women and children were killed on our highways in 1996 in accidents that involved alcohol. This year, the Legislature is considering a wide range of legislation designed to combat drunk driving, including:

- Lowering the state’s legal blood-alcohol content (BAC) level from 0.10 percent to 0.08 percent.
- Increasing fines and jail times for all DUI convictions, with substantial increases mandated for repeat offenders.



Prior to grade separation, cars wait for trains to pass.



After grade separation, cars pass over or under railroad tracks without delay.

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- Requiring certain drunk driving offenders to only operate vehicles equipped with ignition interlock devices. Cost for the devices, which are now technically feasible, would be at the offender's expense.
- Authorizing impoundment or forfeiture of vehicles operated by individuals with a suspended or revoked driver's license.

Controlling crime

Several brutal murders committed by juveniles who walked away from group home and other facilities demonstrate the urgent need for **stronger restrictions on how these facilities handle offenders**. We must take steps now to ensure the state can properly monitor and control violent juvenile offenders to increase the safety of our homes and neighborhoods.

Improving education

During the 1998 session, we will continue our efforts to improve the quality of education, with a special emphasis on doing a better job of teaching reading. Last year's low test scores for our state's fourth-graders emphasize the importance of this challenge. We know these new tests are just the beginning of an opportunity for higher academic expectations and student performance. **It's a challenge we must not only accept, but must achieve.**

A number of bills to help advance student performance will be considered this year, including legislation to improve reading and other basic education teaching, ensure a safe learning environment, strengthen discipline options, and promote more parental involvement and local control.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

For an update on the 1998 legislative session and an opportunity to ask questions and share your ideas, please join me at one of the following Town Hall meetings:

Saturday, Feb. 21

Sumner Library — 1 p.m.

Summit Library — 3 p.m.



Personally sponsored bills

- **Creating a crime of "voyeurism."** This measure would make it unlawful to view, photograph or film a person without his or her consent when the person viewed is in a place where an expectation of privacy is reasonable. In addition, it would be unlawful for a retail merchant to view, photograph or film a patron in a dressing room. Either offense would be a gross misdemeanor if committed against an adult, and a class C felony if committed against a minor.
- **Prohibiting the sale of drug paraphernalia.** Strengthening our existing laws by simply eliminating the sale of drug paraphernalia could be an important deterrent to drug use.
- **Authorizing statewide sex-offender registration.** Currently, registration is only by county. For those offenders who move, other jurisdictions don't know about them until they commit another crime. This bill would close that loophole.
- **Creating a crime of "mistreatment."** Designed to protect our most vulnerable citizens — dependent elders and disabled — who rely upon others for the basic necessities of life. Individuals who are entrusted with such care, and who do not do their job, could be charged with criminal mistreatment in the third degree.
- **Protecting sexual assault victims.** This measure would allow access to the state address confidentiality program for all sexual assault victims, not just those who are victims of domestic violence.

Please
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stamp
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Action Gram Please let me know what you think about the issues discussed in this newsletter or any other state government or legislative issues. Write your name, address and phone, then cut out this page, fold it with my return address showing, then seal, stamp and mail. Thanks.

name: _____ address: _____ phone: _____

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